

(organ music playing) (choir singing hymn)

Priest: Let us offer unto God our unison prayer of confession. Let us pray. Almighty God, our heavenly father, who of thy great mercy has promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto thee, have mercy upon us. Pardon and deliver us from all our sins. Confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and bring us to everlasting life. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. And now, as our savior Christ hath taught us, we pray together, saying: Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. (church organ playing) (congregation singing hymn)

Choir: Amen!

Priest: "But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now, as he journeyed, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him, and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him: "Saul, Saul. Why do you persecute me?" And he said, "who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias," and he said "here I am, Lord." And the lord said to him, "rise, and go to the street called Straight, and inquire into the house of Judas, for a man of Tarsus named Saul." But Ananias answered "Lord, I have heard from many about this man. How much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine, to carry my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the sons of Israel, for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias departed, and entered the house, and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately, something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose, and was baptized, and in the synagogue, immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying "He is the son of God." " Here endeth the lesson. (audio cutting) The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

Priest: Let us pray. Oh God of peace, who through thy son, Jesus Christ, did send forth one faith for the salvation of mankind, from the confused voices of our daily life, help us now to draw nearer to thee, that with mind and heart we may worship thee. We bring to thee the thirst we cannot quench at any earthly

spring, and the hunger which is only satisfied by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Lift us out of our shadows, into thy light, out of our perplexities into thy clear truth, out of our burdens, into thy strength. Out of our troubles, into thy peace. Out of our foolish and disappointed purposes, into thy holy and blessed will. Take from us the tediousness, the anxiety and fear of selfish minds, the unfruitfulness of cold and narrow affections, and the weakness of an inconstant will. Send thy grace and heavenly blessing upon all Christian people who are striving to draw nearer to thee, and to each other, in the unity of the spirit, and in the bond of peace. Give us penitence for our divisions, wisdom to know thy truth, courage to do thy will, love that shall break down the barriers of pride and prejudice, and unswerving loyalty to thy holy name. Suffer us not to shrink from any endeavor which is in accordance with thy will, for the peace and unity of thy church. Give us boldness to seek only thy glory, and the advancement of thy kingdom, and do thou grant that we may be so molded by the spirit of thy son, that we may not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but may be transformed by the renewal of our minds, that we may know and practice what is the will of God, what is good, and acceptable, and perfect. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen. (organ plays) (soloist singing hymn) (congregation singing hymn) (soloist singing hymn) (congregation singing hymn) (soloist singing hymn) (congregation singing hymn) (soloist and congregation singing hymn alternately)

- [Soloist and Congregation] Amen, amen. (organ playing) (congregation singing hymn) Amen.

Priest: Oh Lord, our God, thou king of all the earth, accept of thine infinite goodness the offerings of thy people, which, in obedience to thy commandment, and in honor of thy holy name, we now dedicate to thy service in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (footsteps) At no time in the present century has the South been so deeply troubled in soul as it is today. This anxiety is of course partly the result of pressures arising out of a far-reaching decision of the Supreme Court. But its root goes deeper. Unless I am seriously mistaken, it stems from a growing conviction that our legally-imposed color bar is in basic conflict with both the democratic ethic and the Christian faith. This conflict is involving us of the South in a deepening moral crisis, which I feel constrained to lay before you today. In meditating upon our present crisis, my thought has turned often to that dramatic story, which was read to you this morning. In passionate loyalty to his ancestral tradition, Saul of Tarsus earnestly tried to wipe out the early Christians. Where persuasion would not work, he did not hesitate to persecute, to imprison, even to murder. Yet at the very height of his frenzied zeal, while hurrying to Damascus, a light from heaven brighter than the sun flashed through his conscience, and he heard a voice saying "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you?" stammered Saul. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," replied the heavenly visitor. It hurts you to kick against the goals. Note one thing: the more fiercely Saul persecuted the early Christians, the more brightly the moral flame burned within his conscience, until at last the scales fell from his blinded eyes, and he was transformed into an advocate of that which had formerly opposed. Are not we of the South experiencing an inner moral struggle which broadly parallels that of Saul of Tarsus? Is not the light from above disturbing our conscience in depth? Will the heavenly flame eventually burn through our clouded vision, and transform our racial perspectives? My considered answer, based finally upon faith in Almighty God, is a strong "yes." Our moral road to Damascus may be long and tortuous, but we are on our way. When I say we are on our way, I mean simply that thousands of White Southerners including, especially youth, no longer find it morally possible to justify the principle of racial segregation in any area of life, least of all in the church of Jesus Christ. To be sure, they are still a minority group, yet their numbers are steadily increasing. They do not, like some noisy

demagogues, shout their views from the housetops, but their convictions lie deep nevertheless. One fact is worth emphasizing at the outset: This new spiritual outlook did not start on May 17, 1954, when the Supreme Court first ruled against the Plessy Doctrine of "separate but equal". In fact, ever since the first World War, the South has been the scene of the prophetic labors of such men as the late Will Alexander, and Howard Odum, men to whom the color bar was anathema. Through the actions of interracial councils and commissions, through researches and publications, they sowed the seeds of a nobler South, while they labored patiently within a bi-racial framework, they foresaw the day when it would be abandoned. Four years before the Supreme Court handed down its historic decision, the Presbyterian Synod of Alabama declared, "segregation is living on borrowed time." "Both the federal constitution and the Christian conscience," the Synod added, "have written doom upon the brow of legalized segregation." Southern groups in all the other major denominations were expressing similar convictions. Meanwhile, church-related colleges, graduate and professional schools of state universities, and theological seminaries were opening their doors to all qualified students. Hence, when the Supreme Court finally struck down the Plessy Doctrine, the leaders of most of the religious bodies in the South were already prepared to sanction its ruling. Episcopalians in the Southeastern Provincial Conference declared that decision just and right. A Texas Methodist conference declared it to be but the legal expression of the position of the Christian church. The General Assembly of Southern Presbyterians not only commended the decision but called upon all the members of the churches to support it wholeheartedly. The Southern Baptist Convention declared, "The decision is in harmony with the constitutional guarantee of equal freedom and justice, and with the Christian principle of justice and love to all men. Catholic and Jewish agencies in the South were equally affirmative in their actions. These church groups, be it noted, were not outside meddlers, but native-born Southerners. For a brief interval after the Supreme Court rendered its verdict, it looked as though a good many citizens in the South would take immediate steps to keep faith with the Court. Indeed, local school boards in some of the more progressive cities began taking actions toward compliance. But alas, alas, this affirmative spirit soon encountered another kind of spirit. Tough-willed resistance movements began emerging. Springing up first of all in the lower South, led by ardent segregationists whose extremer members openly defied the court. They insisted on the freedom of their respective states to do as they pleased, but yet, they did not tolerate that same freedom within their own borders. High, rigid conformity was demanded, even at the price of coercion, if necessary. Now this spirit of resistance later spread to the upper South as well. Although revealing itself in sweeter words, its overall effect was the same. Almost everywhere, the prevailing mood has been to prevent any local community from cracking the wall of segregation. This holds true not only for public schools, but largely also for many other public facilities, such as city halls, county courthouses, and recreational centers. Even where the color bar has been outlawed, as in public education, the negro is exhorted to volunteer to remain segregated. This frozen temper says "don't give an inch, or you will have to give a mile." Great dangers, my brethren, lie ahead of the South in this inflexible mood. First of all, we are in danger of jeopardizing our one best hope: our public schools. The movement to assign to local communities the final decision on questions of vital school policy, hitherto reserved to state boards of education, can easily scuttle the hard-won standards which have been a half-century in building. This backward trend, devised as a stratagem against the Court, threatens the South with all the evils of the old district school system. The outcome could be not a statewide system, but a patchwork of uneven policies, standards and programs. Add to this the legal option of any local community to abolish its public schools altogether, and the prospect becomes alarming. Some may call this power to

close a local school a "safety bell", but it seems far more like a time bomb. If we in the South ever become so unbalanced as to wipe our public schools, we will surely sentence our children to the tyranny of ignorance and poverty. A second danger is, that the South will cut itself off from the main currents of the nation, just when it is rising. Industrial, political, cultural. Our twentieth century could be secession, not from the formal union as in 1860, but secession from the growing stream of democratic civilization. It is as true of a region as it is of an individual, that if it tries to live unto itself, it will shrivel up and die of stagnation. This decaying process would be hastened by the migration of our abler youth to freer sections of the nation, as in the wake of the Civil War. Meanwhile the present flow into our region of industrialists, scientists, skilled technicians and vocational specialists would slow down to a trickle. This two-way loss of creative leadership would leave the South, leave to the South, the inevitable ravages of political demagogues, cultural drones, and moral bigots. Yet another danger is, that we will so bungle our interracial relations in this critical moment, as to cripple America's moral leadership in the larger world community. Remember: two out of every three people in the world are colored, and our behavior is an open book to them. The shameful, loosest spectacle, and the barbaric, inutile murder were unfolded daily to the Chinese, the Africans, the Indonesians, and other colored peoples who are coming to power in the greatest revolution in modern history. They measure our morality, and our good will, not by our words, but by our deeds. When the voice of America proclaims to them the virtues of our Declaration of Independence and our Bill of Rights, they read our professed ideals through the lenses of our daily actions. When the Supreme Court first ruled against segregated schools, public schools, totalitarian governments interpreted it as a fraud, pawned upon the world. And they predicted that in any case, the South would not abide by it. Shall we in the South fulfill their cynical prophecies? If we do, my brethren, we will give aid and comfort to the mortal enemies of democracy throughout the world. But that which should give us the deepest concern of all is the tragic fact that we dare to risk all these dangers because of a fundamentally anti-Christian assumption about a group of our fellow men. After taking a wide-ranging poll of Southern sentiment, Howard Odum declared that the heart of our credo could be summed up in these words: "The negro is a negro, and nothing more." In other words, the negro is humanly inferior to the white man. In the final analysis, our dual-racial structure here in the South rests upon that belief. Let us then face squarely our Southern credo, in the light of the revelation which came to Saul as he paced the Damascus road. Without question, he did more than any other follower of Jesus to emancipate the early church from the bonds of Judaism, and transform it into a fellowship of all races and peoples. For this very reason, his fellow Jews sought to destroy him. Nevertheless, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. When Peter later wavered in his supra-racial views, Paul boldly rebuked him to his face. "Is God the God of the Jews only?" Paul asked the Christians at Rome. "Is he not the God of Gentiles also?" "Yes," he said, "of Gentiles also because since God is one," note well those decisive words. "Since God is one." Paul here laid the very cornerstone of Christian community. It is faith, not race, which determines the range of our Christian fellowship. Where there is true faith in one God, there is no color bar. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, for you all are one in Christ Jesus," said Paul. Is it not clear then, why we White church men of the South are conscience-stricken? We do not presume to be better than our worthy forefathers, yet we do believe, as apparently they did not, that a racially segregated church is a tragic denial of that community which is inherent in one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Since God is one, we are members one of another, equally subject to God's judgment and mercy. Equally accountable to him, equally valuable in his sight. Hence, to discriminate against a single one of his children on the ground of race is to impugn the moral character of almighty God. Human equality is not the gift of man. It is the gift of

God. Therefore human equality is an unalienable spiritual attribute of every child of God. When we consider the Supreme Court's decision from this Christian perspective, we are bound to admit that it is morally just and right. If therefore this ruling is being bitterly assailed in the South at this hour, it is due in no small measure to the moral infirmity of our Christianity. Many of the most rabid enemies of the Court's ruling are members of our Protestant churches. Let us ministers in particular take this fact seriously to heart. Pondering our faith, and our stewardship, have we been fully surrendered to the will of God? It is hard to believe. It is hard to believe that so many laid pillars in our churches would now be party to an un-Christian movement to obstruct the course of elemental human justice. How long, how long will be our road to Damascus? It will be as long as we persist in our un-Christian belief that our colored brother is only a negro, and nothing more. A fundamental change of heart may require a very long journey, a journey of trial and tribulation over a torturous road, nevertheless nevertheless, since the moral flame from heaven is already penetrating our consciences, the eternal light will eventually burn away the scales which obscure a larger vision of the kingdom of God. Symbolic of that new day is a generally unknown act which was performed by the South's greatest Civil War hero. Within a year after the Confederates surrendered the Appomattox, an unwanted negro entered one of Richmond's most fashionable churches while holy communion was being served, made his way down the aisle, and knelt at the communion altar. The congregation sat aghast, and emotions quickened. Sensing the situation, a great layman arose in his pew, stepped forward to the altar, and knelt beside his colored brother. Captured by his spirit, the congregation followed his magnanimous example. That layman was Robert E. Lee. On that Sunday morning, he won the greatest battle of his career. For greater is he that mastereth his spirit than he that taketh a city. By the grace of God, Robert E. Lee lighted the spiritual torch which will never go out until we of the South, Black and White, are transformed into a fellowship as broad and as enduring as the love of Christ. Let us pray. Eternal God who hast created of one blood the whole family of Earth, and hast made us members of thy kingdom through Jesus Christ, our Lord, save us, we beseech thee, from racial malice, and from all other sins which separate us from thee and from our fellow men. Now unto him, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our savior through Jesus Christ, our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, today and forever. (organ playing)

Choir: (singing) Amen, amen, amen, amen, amen, amen, amen.